

REMARKS / ARGUMENTS

In the above-identified Office Action the Examiner has restricted the invention to four groups of claims, Group I claims 1-4, 6-12, 14-19, 26 and 34 drawn to a method of preparing a sapogenin, Group II claims 20-22, 25 and 27-33 drawn to a method of interconversion, Group III claims 23 and 32-33 drawn to a method of preparing smilagenin, and Group IV claims 24 and 32-33 drawn to a method of preparing epismilagen. Applicant hereby elects Group I, claims 1-4, 6-12, 14-19, 26 and 34 for prosecution with traverse.

Applicant believes that the method of Claim 23 in Group III falls within the scope of Claim 1 and that the carbon center 3 of smilagenin is in the beta position not the alpha position as suggested by the Examiner (reaction scheme, page 9, of the specification). Therefore, Claim 23 should have been placed in Group I where, if the Examiner should agree, Applicant hereby elects Claim 23 as a part of Group I in addition to the other claims set forth above.

In addition, Applicant questions how claims 32-33 could be in three different groups, i.e., Group II, Group III and Group IV.

With the above response, Applicant considers all issues raised in the office Action of March 25, 2009 to be fully responded to. Applicant wishes to reserve the right to file one or more divisional/continuation applications in respect of the deleted subject matter.

Applicant hereby requests reconsideration and reexamination thereof.

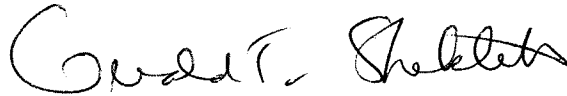
No further fee or petition is believed to be necessary. However, should any further fee be needed, please charge our Deposit Account No. 23-0920, and deem this paper to be the required petition.

Application No. 10/531,086
Amdt. dated 24 April 2009
Reply to Office Action of 25 March 2009

With the above amendments and remarks, this application is considered ready for allowance and applicant earnestly solicits an early notice of same. Should the Examiner be of the opinion that a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of the subject application, he/she is respectfully requested to call the undersigned at the below listed number.

Application No. 10/531,086
Amdt. dated 24 April 2009
Reply to Office Action of 25 March 2009

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerald T. Shekleton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gerald" and last name "Shekleton" clearly distinguishable.

Dated: 24 April 2009

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